

On our way to sustainability

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MEA – on our way to sustainability

About MEA:

MEA is a national, independent not for profit organisation dedicated to fostering professionalism and excellence in all aspects of meetings management. It also promotes the value and effectiveness of meetings as an important high-yield sector of business travel and tourism. MEA offers Professional Development programmes, accreditation, recognition, disseminates information, provides a forum for its members to discuss current issues, and represents the industry to government.

Importantly, Meetings & Events Australia creates a business to business (B2B) community.

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MEA National Annual Conference

Alice Springs – May 2008

- Destination tenders called for in 2005 and decided in 2006
- Four destinations tendered for the conference
- Tender panel decided upon destination
- Sustainability or hosting a ‘green event’ was not included in the tender documentation

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MEA National Annual Conference

Alice Springs – May 2008

- Conference planning commenced in June 2007, just after our Annual National Conference in Hobart
- Conference planning consisted of:
 - ✓ Conference Manager (MEA staff member)
 - ✓ Local Host Committee (Alice Springs)
 - ✓ Program Committee (Australia wide)
 - ✓ Wise Counsel (Industry experts)
- Late decision to try and run a sustainable conference
 - ✓ Decision made June 2007
 - ✓ Mentoring company appointed
 - ✓ Challenges?

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MEA National Annual Conference
Alice Springs – May 2008

Sustainability drivers

- Awareness of environmental issues
- Desire to reduce the conference emissions and impact on the environment
- Corporate social responsibility
- Provision of leadership to members

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MEA National Annual Conference
Alice Springs – May 2008

Key sustainability decisions

- Set a long-term plan (was not going to happen all at once)
- Work with the ‘experts’ that can mentor and assist
- Don’t make promises that cannot be kept – i.e. ‘on our way to sustainability’

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MEA National Annual Conference
Alice Springs – May 2008

Steps taken

- MEA changed and improved many of the procedures for this conference, products used and services acquired in order to reduce the footprint on the environment

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MEA National Annual Conference
Alice Springs – May 2008

How?

- Encouraged delegates to pay the extra offset rate to their airline for travel to Alice Springs
- Had the delegate carbon footprint measured and offered delegates to pay an additional tariff to offset this
- Worked with the Carbon Institute to manage the offset tariffs received (over 35% of delegates)

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MEA National Annual Conference
Alice Springs – May 2008

How?

- Recycling in place at all conference venues with constant monitoring of effectiveness and bins clearly labelled and accessible
- Compost facilities put in place when possible
- Primary printing supplier using only recycled paper
- When ordering supplies for the conference, best fit options were selected to reduce waste

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Alice Springs – May 2008

How?

- Audio visual elements were reduced during breaks and turned off overnight
- Tap water and glasses were used at all indoor events as an alternative to disposable cups and water bottles
- Water bottles were available to delegates at outdoor events rather than a bottle handed to every delegate

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MEA National Annual Conference

Alice Springs – May 2008

How?

- No speaker notes were distributed during the conference (available online post conference)
- Attendees encouraged to bring their own pen and paper
- Electronic feedback rather than paper feedback
- Outdoor functions utilised biodegradable plates, cups and cutlery
- Accurate catering numbers given to caterers to ensure waste reduction

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Challenges

Due to some previously locked in plans MEA was not able to completely transform the event to a carbon-free conference for 2008 – but 70%, challenges included:

- Air conditioning reductions
- Supplier contracts e.g. green cleaning products
- Conference destination and availability of product
- Shipping to destination
- Overall lack of a ‘sustainability policy’ before conception

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Continuous improvement

- Ensure that the running of a 'sustainable conference' is written into the tender brief for destinations
- Ensure that briefs provided to suppliers make it quite clear that the intent is to run a sustainable event
- Price the conference according to the need to be sustainable e.g. sourcing of supplies to the destination

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- Write a sustainability policy
- On renewal of sponsorship arrangements work with sponsors on benefits that embrace sustainability
- Consider the practicality of events within the conference in regard to sustainability
- Ensure good communication with all involved and that they are working to the same agenda (will come with education)

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Annual National Conference 2009

- Adelaide won the bid as the host destination
- Due to timing once again sustainability was not written into the bid
- Will not be promising a 100% sustainable conference
- Expect to improve on the measured 70% of 2008 due to lessons learned

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MEA National Conference 2010

- Destinations are currently being considered through a bid process
- Sustainability has been written into the bid
- We are hoping to measure a 100% sustainable conference

An industry perspective

BECA (Business Events Council of Australia)

- Recent summit coinciding with MEA's Alice Springs Conference
- Environmental sustainability was an agenda topic and an example of key outcomes included:

An industry perspective

- Form a taskforce to develop a business events industry action plan
- Work with MEA to provide more information and training sessions on a state and national basis to increase industry's knowledge of effective green business practices
- Research and recommend a number of carbon offset companies and accreditation schemes that the business events industry can use with confidence

An industry perspective

- Compile case study information on the costs of 'going green' and the savings, advantages and business won by going green to disseminate to industry and for the use in government lobbying and marketing
- Call on government to introduce 'green' KPIs for all of their events using the 'all of industry' (BECA) endorsed checklist